



## michigan league of conservation voters

September 19, 2012

### Testimony in Opposition to SB 1276

#### Michigan Senate

#### Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes

Dear Senators,

The Michigan League of Conservation Voters opposes SB 1276. In addition to threatening Michigan's forest certification, this bill may have additional unintended consequences due to its broad wording. Biological diversity is an integral component to nature and the conservation of our natural systems.

SB 1276 prohibits the DNR from designating land for biological diversity. This section puts in jeopardy Michigan's forest certifications, which ensure open markets for Michigan wood products for major commercial purchasers which require those certifications.

SB 1276 also deletes the conservation of biological diversity from the DNR's duties and requires it to balance its management activities with economic values, which it already does. Biological diversity is a core component of conservation; eliminating it from the DNR's duties would make the DNR simply a state-run manager of tree farms. Nature is a complex system, full of interactions which depend on biological diversity. Prohibiting the DNR from managing for biological diversity could hamper existing programs to eradicate invasive plants and species, which tend to act monolithically in foreign environments in the absence of natural competitors.

The DNR already balances economic interests with its conservation duties through the form of timber harvests and mineral rights leasing. Managing for biodiversity means "management," not a "hands-off" policy. Criticism of harvest rates doesn't mean that the DNR isn't balancing those interests; it just means that critics may want the relationship imbalanced to their benefit. Teddy Roosevelt, in his 1910 speech on conservation, said, "... there are many people who will go with us in conserving the resources only if they are to be allowed to exploit them for their benefit. That is the one of the fundamental reasons why the special interests should be driven out of politics." Further, a healthy and biologically diverse ecosystem brings its own economic values in the form of increased tourism and

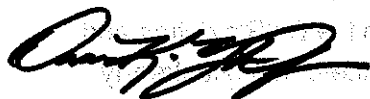
recreational activity.

SB 1276 also eliminates "restoration" from the definition of "conservation," eliminates a reference to "unusual flora and fauna" in the definition of "natural area," and deletes a legislative finding that most losses of biological diversity are the result of human activity. Restoration is a fundamental part of conservation. Aldo Leopold wrote, "The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to keep all the parts." Additionally, the history of our state serves as a startling example of how human activity causes a loss of biological diversity. The lack of grayling in Grayling, of pigeon in the Pigeon River, of elk in Elk Rapids, and of virgin white pine from all over northern Michigan and the UP testifies to that. Simply deleting it from the legislative findings does not make it so. If this bill had been passed decades ago, restoration of Michigan's elk and moose herds would have been impossible.

Passage of this bill would threaten the markets where Michigan forest products are allowed and hamper the DNR's responsibility to manage against invasive species and restore native species. Michigan has a proud legacy of conservation which should not be diminished by removing central tenants of conservation — biological diversity and restoration — from the state laws which address it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



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